

# Galamsey and the Making of a Deep State in Ghana: Implications for National Security and Development

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## Abstract

Illegal small scale mining is commonplace in Ghana. It easily attracts farmers and other artisans/traders because it is lucrative, despite its associated life-threatening dangers. Its potential threats to Ghana's future and implications on national security and development in, particularly, affected districts and communities cannot be overlooked. This paper argues that illegal mining of all kind is a threat to the security of mining communities and the nation in general. Using the *deep state* theory, it analyses how illegal ASM can collapse security systems and governance machinery in order to co-opt individuals and groups to their favour and perpetuate their unlawful trade. It also highlights critical policy and academic issues in the discourse on illegal mining in the Ghanaian society, and the threats illegal mining poses to national security.

**Keywords:** galamsey, deep state, national security, national interest, development, Ghana

## 1. Introduction

Agriculture and mining may well have been the first and second, respectively, of humankind's earliest endeavours, as the two are considered "the primary or basic industries of early civilization" (Hartman and Mutmansky, 2002: 1). In the case of mining industry, it has played an important part in human existence since the prehistoric times (Madigan, 1981; Hartman and Mutmansky, 2002). For the purposes of this paper, the term *mining* is broadly understood to be "the extraction of any naturally occurring mineral substances - solid, liquid, and gas - from the earth or other heavenly bodies for utilitarian purposes" (Hartman and Mutmansky, 2002: 1). Mining is indisputably a major economic activity in many African countries that are endowed with mineral resources. It can be traced to several centuries pre-dating the exploration of the African continent by European adventurers and traders during the late fifteenth century (Owusu and Dwomoh, 2012; Adjei et al, 2012). In West Africa, for instance, its existence dates back to the period before the trans-Saharan trade that saw brisk trade in gold and other minerals in different parts of the continent. Expectedly, it became the sole preserve of colonialists and merchant companies during the colonialism period. The availability of mineral resources in some territories earned them (colonial) names such as the Gold Coast, in the case of present-day Ghana, and La Cote d'Ivoire. Ghana's huge gold deposits are ranked as the ninth in the world (GB&F, 2012) and second on the continent after the Republic of South Africa (Berger, 2008; Airo, 2010; Owusu and Dwomoh, 2012).

Artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM)<sup>1</sup> has in the recent past been a respected traditional vocation in Ghana. For centuries, mining of gold and other metals has been characterised by individual, group or family ownership in local communities before the introduction of foreign large scale operations during and after British colonial rule. The passage of *The Small-scale Gold Mining Law, 1989 (P.N.D.C.L. 218)* officially legalised the practice and assured Ghanaians of government's commitment towards re-indigenising the mining sector after decades of foreign control during colonial rule and dominance in the post-independence era. As a result, 300 mining concessions were registered to small scale mining companies in 3 years after the passage of the law (Amankwah & Anim-Sackey, 2003). These hopes were, however, dashed when the implementation of PNDCL 218 was fraught with bureaucratic challenges that made acquisition of licences and mining concessions difficult. These difficulties partly explain why many people are forced to mine illicitly (GB&F, 2012; Hilson and Potter, 2003).

This notwithstanding, the small scale mining sub-sector has over the years been contributing significantly to the Ghanaian economy. According to Amankwah and Anim-Sackey (2003: 134-135),

By the end of 2003, the small-scale mining sector had sold about 1.5 million ounces of gold and 8.0 million carats of diamonds to PMMC and other licensed precious mineral buying agencies in the country. The contribution of the sector to the gold and diamonds production in the country is significant as shown in Table 1.

This sub-sector contributed on the average about 12% and 89% of the total outputs of gold and diamond respectively from 2000 to 2008 (UN, 2010). It was ranked fifth and third in 2011 and 2012 respectively out of the twelve major gold producing entities in the country, as shown in Figure 1 (GCM, 2013). In 2012, for instance, it contributed 10% of the total gold production in the country (GCM, 2013).

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, it broadly "refers to mining by individuals, groups, families or cooperatives with minimal or no mechanisation, often in the informal (illegal) sector of the market" (Hentschel et al., 2002).

Today, ASM is done illegally in many parts of Ghana. Farmers and other artisans/traders are easily attracted to it because it is lucrative, despite its associated life-threatening dangers. The number of illegal miners and the scope of their activities across the length and breadth of the country are increasingly alarming (GB&F, 2012). What are its implications on national security and development in, particularly, affected districts and communities? Combining evidences from the literature, media reports and government documents, this paper attempts to explain why local and state resources should be deployed to curb illegal artisanal and small-scale mining activities in Ghana. It argues, using the *deep state* theory, that illegal mining of all kind is a threat to the security of mining communities and the nation in general. It highlights critical policy and academic issues in the discourse on illegal mining in the Ghanaian society, and the threats illegal mining poses to national security.

## 2. Theorising Illegal ASM in Ghana

ASM is a global phenomenon that is most commonly practised in developing “economies with old mining, metal working and jewellery traditions, and where the commodity has a high value relative to its mass, such as is the case with gold and precious stones” (AngloGold Ashanti, 2006: 124). For many centuries, ASM of precious minerals has made direct and/or indirect significant impact on the socioeconomic lives of peoples and communities around the world (Kesse, 1985; Hilson, 2002; Amankwah & Anim-Sackey, 2003). It has been the source of livelihood for families and communities in over 30 developing countries (AngloGold Ashanti, 2006). Its practice in Africa dates back to pre-colonial period when locals used to mine gold, diamond, bauxite and other mineral resources for domestic and international use. Today, many African governments conceptualise it to be a mining operation that is subsistent and involves the use of simple tools to extract minerals.

Globally, many governments consider the small-scale sub-sector illegal and attempt to ban it through legislative and other means, leading to non-regulation of the sub-sector and total neglect in most cases (IIED, 2002). In Africa, governments have instituted various regulatory regimes on the mining industry (particularly the small-scale sub-sector); failure to comply with them renders a form of ASM illegal. The whole argument of legality and illegality rests on the statutory and other legal regimes that repose sole ownership of mineral resources to the state. In this respect, mineral resources may only be extracted with a prior acquisition of relevant licences and clearances from state institutions. Such institutions could be ministries responsible for land resources, agencies responsible for environmental protection, and even those in charge of public health and safety.

Illegal mining as a concept and a socio-economic/environmental problem has been defined variedly by academics and practitioners. In this paper, it is any surface or underground mining operation that is mainly done on small-scale without “land rights, mining license, exploration or mineral transportation permit or of any document [from appropriate authorities] that could legitimate the on-going operations” (Dozolme, n.d.). It is, therefore, not the same as ASM which is considered legal and practiced under specific laws in many countries alongside large-scale mining. Per Ghanaian laws, in addition to the above, only citizens can engage in ASM. Thus, an ASM operation conducted by a non-Ghanaian is illegal per the provisions of the relevant laws on the practice (GoG, 1989). In Ghana presently, illegal miners constitute a great majority of all ASM operators (see also Hilson, 2001).

Illegal ASM (popularly known as ‘*galamsey*’<sup>1</sup>) is a major source of livelihood for an estimated 500,000 to one million Ghanaians engaged in the business. It is concentrated in the towns and forest areas of Brong-Ahafo, Ashanti, Eastern and Western regions and operated along rivers such as the Tano, Ankobra and Pra. It has attracted, and continues to attract, not only citizens but also foreigners to mining communities who come even beyond the continent of Africa. They include nationals of Italy, Togo, Mali, China, Niger, Germany, and Russian. For their use of sophisticated machinery and high investments in *galamsey*, the over 50,000 Chinese have gained some ‘dominance’ and notoriety in the illegal trade.

Illegal ASM in Ghana has grown over the years because of the support and protection enjoyed by miners. Such support and protection come from diverse quarters, depending on the site involved and the amount of money an illegal miner is ready to pay. Evidences, however, show that traditional rulers, public officials and capitalist entrepreneurs frustrate the effort of state agencies at ensuring that mining operations are carried out legally and under approved standards (GoG, 2011). Chiefs, traditionally being the custodians of stool lands, take huge sums of money to cede off even cultivated lands to illegal miners. They sometimes offer to reclaim devastated lands if miners are willing to pay more, instead of the latter doing so after harvesting their booties (Myjoyonline.com, 2013b). The category of public officials who are guilty of facilitating illegal ASM in the country ranges from individuals within the Minerals Commission,<sup>2</sup> the police and local governments to some

<sup>1</sup>*Galamsey*, a corrupted and contracted form of the expression ‘gather them and sell’, which connotes the way illegal miners dispose of ingots to potential buyers or financiers of mining sites (see Amankwah&Anim-Sackey, 2003). A *galamseyer*, therefore, refers to one who engages in the practice.

<sup>2</sup>This state agency is responsible for registering and licensing of companies and individual for the exploration, extraction and

officers of the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS).<sup>1</sup> The arrest of Assemblyman of the Banda Nkwanta electoral area in the Brong-Ahafo Region, Mohammed Bawa, by the police is an example of official connivance in illegal ASM operations in the country (Myjoyonline.com, 2013a).

Our theoretical argument is structured along the *deep-state* theory that emphasises that influential networks of interest group(s) in a country may pose danger to the security of that country. A deep state is “that part of the state which is not publicly accountable, and pursues its goals by means which will not be approved by a public examination” and associated with deep events run by extensive covert networks (Scott, 2007). According to this theory, the existence of a ‘deep state’ ultimately creates a dual state hierarchy where citizen’s allegiance is rendered to two levels of authority in a nation - the state and its internal rival (see Wilson and Lindsey 2009; Holden 2009; Scott 2007). As a result of competing and conflicting power dynamic caused by dual loyalty, nation becomes exposed to direct and indirect domestic and external threats. Such ‘deep state’ dynamics have been associated with Turkish elite and secularist army generals, the Egyptian military set-ups, Columbian drug cartels, and the global Mafia establishment.

The concept of a deep state was most forcefully articulated in Turkey during the tempestuous period of the mid-1970s when the Joint United States Military Mission Aid for Turkey funded and established a broader grouping of military personnel, intelligence agents, businessmen and criminal mafia networks which has since controlled the nation from within to date (Scott, 2007; Holden, 2009). An example is

the networks revealed by the so-called Susurluk incident of 1996, when the victims traveling together in what became a deadly car crash were identified as “an MP, a police chief, a beauty queen and her lover, a top Turkish gangster and hitman called Abdullah Catli.” The giveaway was that “Catli, a heroin trafficker on Interpol’s wanted list, was carrying a diplomatic passport signed by none other than the Turkish Interior Minister himself.” He was carrying narcotics with him at the time of the crash (Scott, 2007: 1-2).

Arguing along the deep theory, just as the narcotics menace, illegal miners (can) use the huge returns they make to ‘buy’ officials (government, security, etc) to collapse security systems and governance machinery in order to perpetuate their trade. Available evidence in Ghana today indicates that many government officials (central and local), security agents, chiefs and individuals have been compromised by illegal miners to the extent that security operations against galamsey are hardly successful; criminal charges are rarely preferred against illegal miners; and legal actions against them predictably end on the rocks. The consequence of this chain of events has been the collapse of the mineral sector and environment, and their associated negative impacts on security (local and national), development, local governance effectiveness etc. Thus, the choice of the deep state theory is most appropriate for explaining how illegal ASM leads to national insecurity. What probably is yet to be achieved by illegal miners is having access to, and controlling, the epicentre of political in Ghana. As argued by Holden (2009), the deep state theory has proven to be a useful tool for analysing modern political developments involving intense struggles for control of epicentre of power in a state.

### 3. Galamsey and National Security

National security is defined here broadly to include all elements that constitute the national interest of a country. National interests, in this sense, means anything or idea that is tied to the well-being, identity, and aspirations of a people within a nation-state which – when endangered – could physically, psychological or even spiritually endanger the essence of that group of people. In this sense, all activities that undermine a nation’s interest(s) will directly or indirectly compromise its security. Consequently, illegal ASM in any form and lawless actions of galamseyers across Ghana constitute a threat to national security.

The potency of illegal ASM, a network of criminal cabal constituting a deep state in Ghana, to frustrate national security and perpetuate insecurity, should not be underestimated. This kind of situation has been referred to by Aubrey Matshiqi, with respect to the politics of the post-apartheid period, as *tensions that have been extended to the state* by

senior politicians, senior government officials, criminal syndicates, rogue intelligence officers, and elements of big business [who] work together in pursuit of question of a common business or economic goal (as quoted in Holden 2009).

The network of individuals and groups engaged in illegal ASM, who have shared interest in maximising profits, will stop at no limits in undermining national security. It is ready to co-opt corrupt state officials, buy traditional ruler, murder/assassinate individuals seen to be obstacles to business growth, and even contribute to the inauguration of governments favourable to their cause. Recent indictments of public

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processing of mineral resources in Ghana.

<sup>1</sup> Officers of GIS have been particularly cited in the case of Chinese illegal miners in the country. They are alleged to have been issuing entry visas at Ghana’s Kotoka International Airport to Chinese nationals who are trafficked into the country.

officials<sup>1</sup> and politicians in galamsey activities are enough indications of how illegal ASM operatives have eaten deeply into state and government apparatuses. By securing safe havens in state institutions, they have managed to scatter national security strategies aimed at stumping galamsey in the country. In fact, they have the potential of dragging the nation into political and/or economic chaos in the near future.

The threat posed by major actors in illegal ASM to national security can be assessed in six main perspectives. Firstly, crimes of all kinds are committed on illegal ASM sites: illegal possession of weapons, use of and dealing in narcotics, and robbery among others. What is more frightening is that assorted illicit weapons widely circulate in mining areas across the country. Additionally, large quantities of weapons (including pump action guns) are believed to have been left behind by deported Chinese illegal miners for their allies, including police personnel, particularly in the Ashanti, Eastern and Western Regions (Myjoyonline.com, 2013c). Is there any guarantee that these arms will not fall in the hands of other criminal elements such as armed robbers? What if these sophisticated weapons are used against security officers engaged in the fight against galamsey operations in the country? The acts of terror visited by “armed illegal gold miners, brandishing guns and firing sporadically” on residents of Obuasi in March 2013, resulting in many residents fleeing the town for dear lives is a clear example of how deadly the presence of galamseyers could be on security at both the local and national levels (Daily Graphic, 2013b). On March 19, 2014, in the same galamsey area, an illegal miner attacked an Anti-Galamsey security patrol team with two rounds of explosives in an attempt to scare the team away from his site (Daily Graphic, 2014).

Secondly, illegal ASM is a conduit for denying the state necessary revenue that could otherwise accrue to the state from legal operations that are done under some level of accountability and transparency. This is possible because, as Hilson and Potter (2003: 241) put it, “illegal mining and illicit mineral marketing activity often go hand-in-hand”. By the compliance of legal small scale miners across Ghana, on the other hand, the Precious Minerals Marketing Company (PMMC) purchased and exported a total 316,699 ounces of gold in 2012 and 235,787 ounces a year earlier (GCM, 2013:10). This meant that the state’s foreign exchange earnings could even double if illegal miners operate within the law and subsequently sell their products to the PMMC, a state agency, as required by law. By denying the state such revenues, galamsey operators have succeeded in exposing the former to potential internal and external economic shocks. The latter can exploit such weakness to manipulate and/or dictate to the state when they have the opportunity.

Thirdly, funds from illegal ASM can be laundered and used to sponsor politicians who would support the pursuit of a particular set of criminal activities in society. Examples abound on how other gold has been used to launder money. “In Central and South America, for example, drug traffickers often buy gold from informal miners and then declare the metal to be part of the output from a formal mine” (IIED, 2002: 323). Ghana’s *Political Parties Act, 2000 (Act 574)* is very specific on who can, and how, sponsor political activities in the country. Two of the means of regulating party in the Act are rules on funding political parties and the requirement for submission of periodic financial reporting on parties’ activities to the Electoral Commission of Ghana. Article 23(1&2) of the Act provides that only citizens and/or corporate entities registered in Ghana (with at least 75% Ghanaian ownership) can contribute to the funding of political parties in cash or kind (Republic of Ghana, 2000). The essence of these provisions is to ensure transparency and accountability in the political parties’ resource mobilization and expenditure (Ninsin, 2006; Nam-Katoti et. al, 2011), and prevent manipulation of political parties by individuals and/or entities whose motives could jeopardise governance, security and development. Implied from this provision is that such contributions or donations from individuals and corporate organisations, as allowed by law, should be earned through lawful means in compliance with other laws of Ghana. What is the guarantee that galamsey networks have not funded, or attempted to fund, a political party in Ghana since the Fourth Republic (1992 to date)? Indeed, it will be scientifically incorrect for us to underrate their capacity to influence political activities in the country. If care is not taken, galamsey influence of politics and security would be Ghana’s version of drug cartels’ influence on some Caribbean and South American countries. This security threat is even more critical because the Ghanaian state does not know exactly how political parties raise funds for their activities, contrary to Article 21 (1) of Act 574. According to this provision, all political parties in Ghana must submit their statements of accounts to the Electoral Commission, clearly stating their sources of funds, contributions or donations in cash or kind from individuals and corporate organisation, among other things, within six months from 31<sup>st</sup> December of every year (Republic of Ghana 2000). But political parties since 1993 have failed to comply with this requirement without them being punished. If there should be any evidence pointing to the receipt of financial or material support from individuals/groups engaged in galamsey by political parties, then that will be a clear case of facilitating money laundering. Per Article 1 (1&2) of the *Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2008 (Act 749)*, an offence of money laundering involves the

<sup>1</sup>Anas (2011) exposed a District Police Commander and his subordinate collecting just 200 Ghana Cedis (about \$120) and 150 Ghana Cedis (\$90), respectively, to facilitate and protect a potential galamsey operator – a clear criminal act against the state.



conversion, concealment, acquisition and/or use of the proceeds of unlawful activity<sup>1</sup> (Republic of Ghana, 2008).

Fourthly, the fact that the state knows nothing about how proceeds from illegal ASM are used is enough threat to national security. For years, Ghanaian security experts have concentrated on threats of narcotic drugs while giving little or no attention to that of galamsey. Dr. Kwesi Annin<sup>2</sup>, however, opines that illegal ASM in Ghana is a potential source of funding for radical extremist groups in Ghana and other West African countries. According to him,

Radical groups need money and it is not only about cocaine [...] Trace the money from galamsey; trace those who buy it and see where the gold and the money go and they [sic] will be very surprised ([Radioxyzonline.com](http://Radioxyzonline.com), 2013).

Annin's fears point to the fact that it is very easy for galamsey proceeds to be used in illicit activities. Since galamsey products enter the supply chain informally, they can also be diverted to further commit or sponsor other crimes in society. The use of Angola's *blood diamonds* and Afghanistan's jade in financing rebel activities are but few examples (IIED, 2002).

Fifthly, galamsey operations act against the promotion of public health. Galamseyers mine in rivers and on banks; discharged untreated liquid waste into rivers; and/or clear plant cover in communities and forest reserves. They pollute water bodies that serve as sources of drinking water for several communities with mercury and other chemicals (Anas, 2011; Kusi-Ampofo & Boachie-Yiadom, 2012); as they may inhale (and cause others do same) dangerous chemicals such as mercury that have adverse effects on one's health (Anas, 2011). Illegal ASM activities have polluted the Pra, Birim and Offin rivers that supply fresh water to parts of the Ashanti, Eastern and Central regions respectively. Some have invaded the main intake points of the Ghana Water Company (GWC) on the Prah River in the Western Region, and completely blocked intake points in other parts of the country (Daily Graphic, 2013a). Evidence from galamsey communities indicate high occurrence of respiratory infections among people who have direct or indirect relationship with galamsey. In Konongo and Odumase in the Ashanti Region, for instance, a strange lung disease killed over 100 - mostly galamseyers - between 2010 and 2013. According to doctors, this strange respiratory disease (chronic obstructive airway) is linked to the use of mercury among galamsey operators (Daily Graphic, 2013c). It is true that legal small or large scale mining may also cause a lot of harm to the environment as illegal ASM does, but the latter's operation often defies operational standards and easily disregards environmental impact assessment (EIA). Both legal mining activities and illegal ASM causes harm to the environment but at different degrees.

Finally, it is a threat to existing infrastructure. A typical example cited in media reports is the illegal ASM operations carried out in the immediate environs of Ghana's newly constructed Bui Hydroelectric Dam. Their activities in the Bui National Park are destroying the plant cover that protects the Bui Dam, thereby exposing the dam to high evaporation (Ghanamma, 2013). Park Authorities' inability to stop illegal miners is evidence that the latter built a strong network of support that could frustrate and defeat any attempts at confronting them. Thus, they act with impunity and courage in disregarding warnings from the National Security apparatus and all agencies concerned. If not stopped, such environmentally dangerous activities would be extended to the Akosombo Dam and other installations that are very critical to the national interest of Ghana.

It is worth noting the complex, often opaque, networks of individuals, miners, middlemen and financiers (AngloGold Ashanti, 2006) who benefit from galamsey flout existing mining laws in Ghana. Neither do they (nationals or foreigners) acquire requisite mining licences from the Minerals Commission of Ghana and the Environmental Protection Agency, nor comply with operation standards set out by relevant laws. They feel emboldened by these networks in their activities because they feel safe from state security and justice systems and are assured of continuous flow of information from their appendages in these institutions. Notwithstanding the need for small scale miners to comply with *The Small-scale Gold Mining Law, 1989 (P.N.D.C.L. 218)*, they are required to comply with other laws that border on public safety and environmental protection. Such laws include *The Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (Act 703)*, the *Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1994 (Act 490)*, and the *Environmental Assessment Regulations 1999*. They are also required to show commitment to compliance with environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedures set out by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the planning and implementation of development projects likely to have potentially adverse effects on the environment (Dickson, 2011). Per the provisions of the Act 490, the EPA is required to, among others,

issue environmental permits and pollution abatement notices for controlling the volume, types, constituents and effects of waste discharges, emissions, deposits or any other source of pollutants and of substances which are hazardous or potentially dangerous to the quality of the

<sup>1</sup> "For the purpose of this Act, unlawful activity means conduct which constitutes a serious offence, financing of a terrorist act or contravention of a law which occurs after the commencement of this Act whether the conduct occurs in this country or elsewhere." (Republic of Ghana, 2008: 4)

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Kwesi Annin is a security analyst and the director of Academic Affairs and Research at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Accra, Ghana.

environment or a segment of the environment (GoG, 1994: 4; see also Dickson, 2011).

Clearly, as argued by GoG (1994), it is very important that every effort is made to control environmental pollution that may result from mining. Significantly, the *Environmental Assessment Regulations* (EAR) provide that

No person shall commence activities in respect of any undertaking which in the opinion of the Agency has or is likely to have adverse effect on the environment or public health unless, prior to the commencement, the undertaking has been registered by the Agency in respect of the undertaking (GoG, 1999: 2).

It specifically provides that an environmental impact statement regulating mining and other extractive industries shall include plans for reclamation of the environment (GoG, 1999). Thus, both small and large mining holdings are required to register their operations (including milling) with the EPA, executive strategies of minimising environmental pollution, and institute comprehensive plans for reclaiming their operational sites, in compliance with the EAR and the EPA's guidelines on environmental assessment (Dickson, 2011; GoG, 1999; EPA, 1996).

#### 4. Galamsey and local Development

Illegal ASM is associated with the causation of environmental, economic and human costs to individuals, communities and the state mainly as a result of the enormous quantities of waste that it introduces into the environment and the revenue denied the state in the process. The economic, environmental and social costs of illegal ASM in Ghana have attracted unprecedented concern by the government, the private sector and the general public in the last few years. The outcry of the general public, in particular, echoes the seriousness that has been attached to the problem on the monumental loss of revenue and vegetation cover in the country. This is because these negative outcomes of illegal ASM threaten citizen's well-being in affected communities and the national economy.

Illegal ASM exacts several economic and social costs on host communities. Economically, it leads to loss of mineral resources, revenue to local government from rents, taxes, and royalties. This economic loss impacts negatively on the capacity of local governments to provide social service needed by communities. Additionally, available social services collapse when miners encroach on lands that support service infrastructure such as school premises, pipelines and community centres.

There is also a human cost involved. Even though there is no statistics on the number deaths in galamsey, many youths (most of them males) have lost their lives through it over the past years. In most illegal mining communities, the youth resort to the trade either because their farmlands have been given to miners or that they lack jobs just like their jobless counterparts from other parts of Ghana and elsewhere. A majority of these deaths occur when mine pits collapse, burying the people working underground. In some instances, illegal miners drown in artificial lakes created for the purposes of extracting the metal from the ore before transferring them for further processing. In 2011 alone, it is estimated that some 300 illegal miners died across the country, as reported in the media (see Figure 2). This leaves out all galamsey related deaths that may not come to the attention of the media. Loss of human lives in this manner is a human security problem.

Indeed, mining in itself is a risky trade. Accident in the sector is frequent, sudden and fatal. It therefore requires adequate skills, safety precaution and the deployment of adequate protective wear. In galamsey, a miner usually goes underground with ordinary flash lamp strap on the forehead, a pick axe and shovel, and a hammer and chisel to strike any tough rock<sup>1</sup>. He does not wear a helmet, protective gloves or shoes. Additionally, the mine may not have a good ventilation to serve as a cooling system. Arguably, deaths do occur on legal mining sites where some of these wears may be provided. But the rate at which accidents on illegal ASM sites turn into fatalities tells that observance of some basic safety measures could minimise casualties. In any case, miners on legal mining concessions enjoy some form of insurance covers while their counterparts appear not to attach any importance to it. Also, the difference between the aftermath of deaths on legal and illegal ASM is compelling. Whereas legal mining entities invest in social security policies for their employees from which dependents can survive on, galamsey operation is devoid of such securities. This leaves workers on galamsey sites and their dependents very vulnerable in the event of accidents. To this end, even a single death recorded on a galamsey site is likely to cause more hardship on society than one on a legal mining concession.

It is worth noting that Figure 2 presents a higher incidence of deaths than injuries across the period under consideration. This could be explained by two possibilities. First, occupational injuries may never be known by those outside the immediate environs of galamsey shafts as victims consider them to be one of the daily occupational hazards they are confronted with in their activities. Second, galamsey deaths attract attention because they usually result from the collapse of mine shafts that require heavy equipment and the presence of professional rescue agencies such as the Ghana National Fire and Rescue Service.

<sup>1</sup> This may not be the case in Chinese galamsey operations where heavy equipment is often used for surface mining.

Recorded deaths seem to be concentrated in galamsey sites in rain forest areas of the country. As reported between January 2009 and May 2014, Western and Ashanti Regions come first and second respectively (see Figure 3).

Besides human costs of galamsey, there is also evidence of ascending crime rates in galamsey communities. The Obuasi Police Command in the Ashanti region, for example, has attributed growing incidence of violent attacks in mining communities in the area to galamseymen who always carry cutlasses, shovels and other implements ready to strike at the slightest misunderstanding; with a recorded 65 cases relating to causing harm, 58 cases of unlawful damage, and 48 cases of threats of causing harm in 2012 alone (GNA, 2013). In this same area on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2013, armed illegal miners lawlessly fired indiscriminately to protest the closure of some illegal ASM pits by operatives of the National Security Council Secretariat – causing intense panic among residents and insecurity in the area (Graphic Online, 2013).

Illegal ASM also threatens the sustainability of the built environment in affected communities. All illegal miners need is to be certain that a particular area in the community is rich in the metal. They will go to all lengths to exploit it even if that has to be done during the night. Homes in several communities have been rendered death traps by the activities of galamsey miners. Examples include those at Gyedu in the Asutifi District of Brong-Ahafo Region. It is worth noting that some illegal miners use explosive materials such as dynamite to facilitate the extraction of metals. Such explosions have in many communities caused houses and social infrastructure (such as schools) to suffer serious structural defects ranging from cracks on walls to total collapse of sections of buildings.

Increasingly, large tracks of land are given out to foreign illegal miners than Ghanaians. Chiefs and family heads, who are custodians of communal and family lands, have found commodity value in land. They lease out lands to highest bidders, usually foreigners who employ locals on their mines. The danger with this practice is that it systematically transfers ownership of especially stool lands to individuals (citizens or foreigners) without corresponding investments to address present and future development needs of indigenes of these areas. Also, foreigners in the galamsey business have access to huge funds that allows them use heavy earth moving machines to destroy large areas of forest and pollute water bodies within a short period.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has succeeded in analysing the security threats that the network of galamsey operatives, a deep state in the making, poses to Ghana. Financier, traditional rulers, politicians, security officers and miners have succeeded in creating strong operational networks that cover up their criminal activities. These networks have successfully created power bases among political domain, traditional setup and security agencies that successfully frustrate any efforts at curbing the menace in almost all parts of Ghana. They have, in the process, rendered state security apparatus ineffective, caused the loss of human lives, and opened communities up to all forms of insecurity. Thus, the existence of this *deep state* is threatening national security and the survival of rural and urban communities alike. This deep state has proven to be ubiquitous throughout many Ghanaian rural areas and rendered Ghanaian governments' attempts at regularising the sub-sector into the formal ASM domain futile, despite having passed a series of industry-specific laws and regulations and implementing of various donor-sponsored support services to promote the ASM business (Hilson and Potter, 2003).

Whether efforts at curbing the galamsey menace are genuine or not is contestable. Many are those who described moves by the ruling National Democratic Congress as mere public relations efforts meant to quell public anger and anxiety. The President of Ghana, J. D. Mahama, constituted the Inter-Ministerial Task Force against Illegal Small-scale Mining (IMTFISM) on May 14, 2013 to end the operations of both local and foreign illegal miners in the country. This taskforce, headed by the Minister of Land and Natural Resources, has been directed to arrest and prosecute galamseymen; seize their equipment; and deport all non-Ghanaian galamseymen, among other actions. By June, 2013, it had arrested several thousands of illegal miners across the country with the Ghana Immigration Service deporting over 4,000 Chinese nationals (Myjoyonline.com, 2013c). The sheer scale of Chinese nationals being arrested in the illegal act prompted the Chinese government to dispatch a delegation to Ghana, in the same month, to discuss the modalities for repatriating its nationals arrested for illegally engaging in small-scale mining with the ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Interior. After a year's operation, the nation is yet to assess the successes and failures of the taskforce. The outcome of such an assessment could predict the sustainability and usefulness in the future.

Whatever the socio-economic root causes of the problem may be,<sup>1</sup> galamsey has defeated the spirit and purpose of *P.N.D.C.L. 218*, which sought to open up the mining sector to small holder Ghanaian miners and legalise their operations under existing mining laws. Solving the problem needs a multifaceted approach. The arrest, prosecution and/or deportation of illegal miners are definitely not the long term solution to the problem. What about Ghanaian traditional rulers and businessmen who fuel and grease the trade and provide

<sup>1</sup>Often blamed on greed, unemployment, poverty, ignorance of its environmental consequences among others.

local protection for illegal miners? Traditional rulers extort huge sums of money from businessmen for 'concessions'. Indeed, these rulers receive better offers from these businessmen than what they receive as royalties from tenant farmers. Expectedly, businessmen would want to reap returns from their investments. They will have to hire the services of miners or buy mined products from them for onward sales on the precious metal market. Would rulers and businessmen give up easily on the quick and juicy returns from illegal mining? What should be done to instil professional discipline in the conduct of state/government officials? This calls for a multi-faceted approach to solving the problem. Pursuing only miners on sites will not solve the problem.

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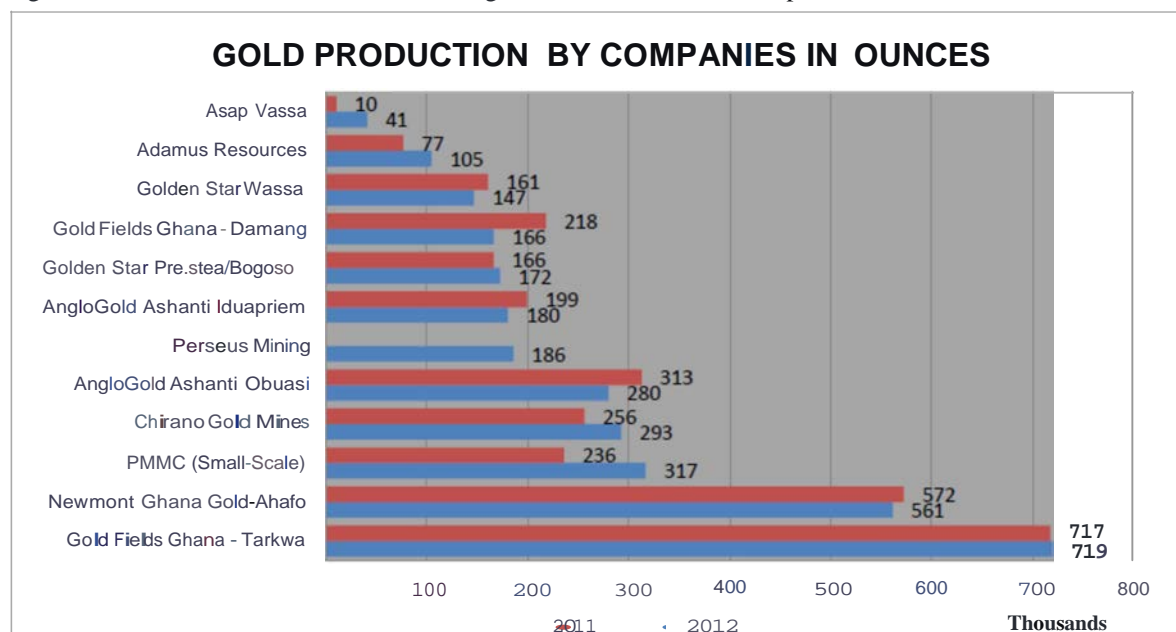
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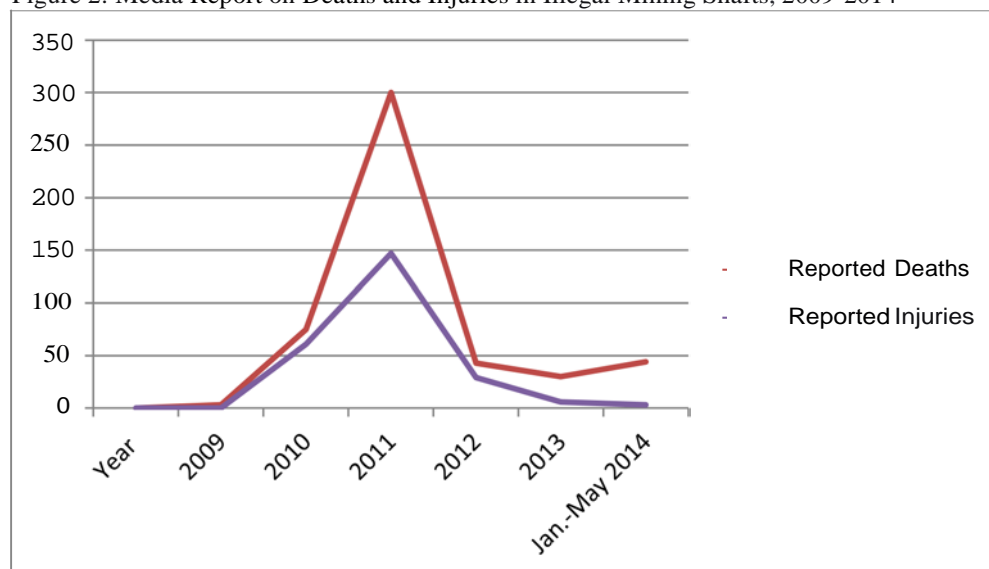
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Figure 1: Contribution of Small Scale Mining to Ghana's Total Gold Outputs in 2011 and 2012



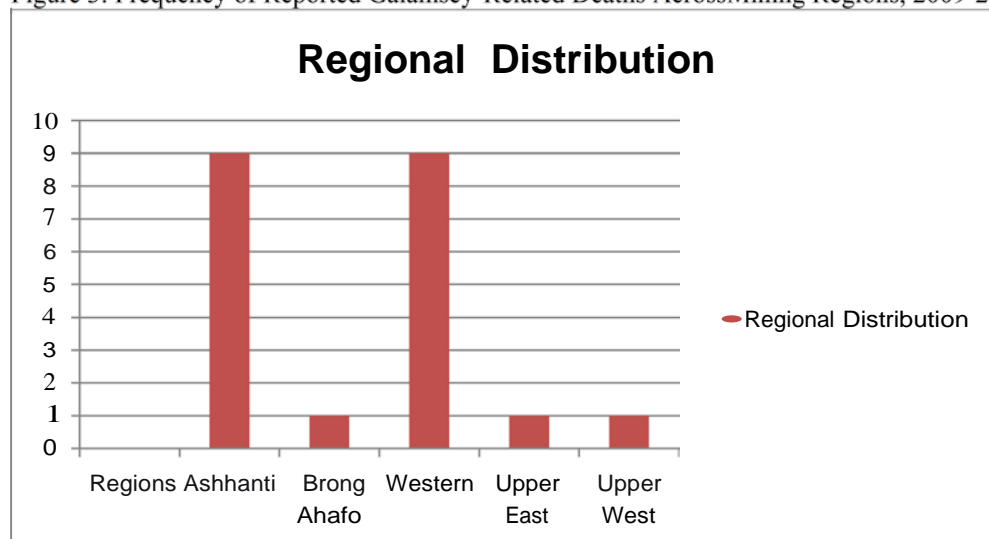
Source: Ghana Chamber of Mines (2013), p.10.

Figure 2: Media Report on Deaths and Injuries in Illegal Mining Shafts, 2009-2014



Source: Various Ghanaian news agencies (compiled by author).

Figure 3: Frequency of Reported Galamsey-Related Deaths Across Mining Regions, 2009-2014



Source: Various Ghanaian news agencies (compiled by author).

Table 1: Gold and Diamond Outputs by the Ghanaian Small Scale Mining Sub-Sector, 1989-2003

Year	Production			
	Gold (oz)	Total national production (%)	Diamond (carats)	Total national production (%)
1989	9272	2.2	151,606	53.1
1990	17,234	3.2	484,876	76.2
1991	15,601	1.8	541,849	78.8
1992	17,297	1.7	442,266	67.4
1993	35,145	2.8	376,400	63.7
1994	89,520	6.3	405,830	53.5
1995	127,025	7.4	337,457	53.4
1996	112,349	7.0	443,244	62.0
1997	107,094	6.1	558,241	67.3
1998	128,334	5.4	570,186	70.8
1999	130,833	5.0	476,744	69.7
2000	145,663	6.0	686,551	69.4
2001	185,596	8.7	973,033	83.2
2002	160,879	7.2	791,908	84.2
2003	211,414	9.5	746,925	82.6

Source: Amankwah & Anim-Sackey (2003), p. 134.

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